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USIB-D-78. 2/1  
30 April 1976

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT : Background and Recommendations on  
the Linguistic Problem

1. The enclosed memorandum to the Director of Central Intelligence from [ ] on this subject and its attachment are circulated for the information of the Board at this time.

2. Mr. Bush has approved the recommendation in paragraph 9 to establish an ad hoc task force of Intelligence Community representatives, preferably including the respective foreign language directors, to be chaired by an IC Staff member to:

a. Review the recommendations contained in the survey conducted by the IC Staff,

b. Determine the feasibility of implementing those recommendations requiring cooperative Community efforts, and

c. Develop an implementation plan that would be recommended to the DCI for his approval and submission to the USIB for consideration.

USIB ACTION REQUESTED

3. [ ] has designated [ ] of the IC Staff to chair this ad hoc task force. Each USIB Principal, if appropriate, is requested to provide the USIB Secretariat by close of business 11 May, of the name, mailing address and phone number of the person he wishes to serve as the representative on this task for [ ]

Executive Secretary

Enclosure

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Enclosure  
USIB-D-78.2/1

30 April 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM :   
Deputy to the DCI for the Intelligence  
Community

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SUBJECT : Background and Recommendations on  
the Linguistic Problem

1. Concern about linguistic requirements and the decline in quality and availability of linguists has been a recurring issue in the Intelligence Community. These topics were raised on numerous occasions by Mr. Colby during program and budget review sessions and in USIB and IRAC meetings. Following the 11 August 1975 IRAC meeting, the IC Staff was tasked to look into the linguistic problem.

2. A survey of CIA, DoD (reporting for all DoD agencies including NSA and the Services) and State was made by the IC Staff to obtain the following data:

- a. Linguist requirements by language.
- b. Language training and quality shortfalls and the most critical languages.
- c. Normal assignments of linguists.
- d. Immediate, mid-term and long-range plans for training and application of linguistic talent.
- e. Efforts in research and development directed toward improvements in language processing.
- f. Recommendations for improving the linguist problem.

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3. The information obtained through the survey reveals the complexity of the linguistic problem and supports the contention that a shortage of skilled linguists exists and will become more extreme in the coming years unless affirmative steps are taken. Within the Intelligence Community we are dealing with about 60 different languages, some 20 of these being identified as the most critical and about 20-30 uncommon languages (e.g., Afrikaans, Kzakh, Mongolian, Uighur, etc.), some of which do not exist in written form. In this latter category of languages, we have few, if any, linguists with skills at Level 2 or above.

4. Although remedial measures can be taken to raise the quality of linguists at the lower levels where the supply is adequate for most languages, only years of experience and advanced training in languages and substantive specialties can impart those skills needed at the higher levels where the impact of a shortfall is greatest. Attainment of these additional skills requires an investment and a commitment from the individual who, in turn, looks for compensation through career advancement as a linguist.

5. Respondents to the survey identify the lack of adequate career opportunities and rewards as a key factor contributing to the decline in quality and supply of skilled linguists. Most of the organizations provided recommendations for overcoming these and other deficiencies (Attachment A) and are taking steps to enhance the foreign language career field, but progress has been slow, particularly in those cases where cooperative action is required. For example, one of the recommendations suggests the interservice detailing of military linguists to overcome temporary deficits in specific languages. As it stands this is an excellent suggestion, but no mechanism currently exists for brokering linguistic talents.

6. The elements of a brokering system would emerge, however, if we were to follow another suggestion and establish a linguist registry so that we would know the skill level, expertise, assignments, and availability of the Intelligence Community linguists. This registry could include selected cleared linguists who are not part of the Intelligence Community but possess uncommon or critical language abilities.

7. This brief discussion highlights the principal facets of the linguistic problem and identifies some steps that need to be taken to improve the quality and availability of skilled linguists. Greatest benefits will come from developing a career program that attracts and retains specialists with combined linguistic and substantive or technical skills; a program that makes the career of these specialists as attractive as those of the engineer or the manager. More attractive job opportunities

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and career incentives for skilled linguists in Government service may do much to rekindle an interest in languages and stem the fall-off in enrollment in language courses on campuses.

8. There are other aspects of the problem dealing with matters of common concern that can be handled more effectively through a cooperative community effort. A mechanism for addressing these issues would be to form an ad hoc task force of Intelligence Community representatives under the direction of an IC Staff member.

9. A recommended interim attack on the linguistic problem is to:

a. Encourage the departments and agencies through the commitment of resources to establish an enhanced career program for those specialists with combined linguistic and substantive skills and to take such other measures that would make selection of this career field both attractive and rewarding.

b. Establish an ad hoc task force of Intelligence Community representatives, preferably including the respective foreign language directors, under the direction of an IC Staff member to:

(1) review the recommendations contained in the survey conducted by the IC Staff;

(2) determine the feasibility of implementing those recommendations requiring cooperative Community efforts; and

(3) develop an implementation plan that would be recommended to the DCI for his approval and submission to the USIB for consideration.



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Attachment to  
Enclosure  
USIB-D-78.2/1  
30 April 1976

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE  
LINGUISTIC PROBLEM

The following comments and recommendations have been extracted from the reports provided by the departments and agencies in response to the survey conducted by the IC Staff.

CIA

The Agency considers the following steps necessary to offset the growing net losses in foreign language skills, particularly at the high proficiency levels:

a. An increased emphasis on recruitment of employees with verified foreign language skills at Level 3 or better, particularly in languages where greatest deficiencies exist in Language-Designated Positions and in the "high-loss rate" languages.

b. An intensified effort on the part of the Agency, and the Federal Government as a whole, to convey to the academic community the general nature of foreign language needs and related job opportunities; particular emphasis is needed to describe the proficiency levels which are needed in reading (translating) and speaking foreign languages.

c. A concerted program to be undertaken within the Agency to provide further training and other language development opportunities for personnel who already have attained Level 2 and 3 skills.

d. A reexamination of the Language-Designated Positions within the Agency to assure that the needs for skills are properly identified so that recruiting, training and staffing plans will be established on a more realistic basis.

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U. S. Air Force

a. Recommend that a careful inventory of military reserve forces be made to identify linguists, some of whom may already possess near-native proficiencies. Consider recalling reserve linguists to active duty to meet critical linguist needs (e.g., filling a key air attache position).

b. Modify DLI training to meet the distinct requirements of the cryptologic (USAFSS) and non-cryptologic (HUMINT, DIA, JSC, FTD, and air attache) linguist users.

c. Authorize resource training, so that a linguist pool may be built as a resource ready for contingencies. Provide language tapes and books to help maintain proficiency when language is not used in everyday job.

U. S. Army

This initial review of intelligence linguist capabilities within this Department has raised significant issues associated with shortfalls in quantity, quality, management, training and utilization. These issues have been the subject of a DA Staff Linguist Personnel Study (ALPS) since 15 June 1975; a more intensive and complementary effort is concurrently in progress concerning only Army Intelligence linguists. This assessment is being carried out under the cognizance of the OASCI Linguist Consultant Board (LINCOB), established on 15 July 1975. The LINCOB assists the ACSI by analyzing, evaluating, reviewing and recommending adjustments to Army linguist programs with the objective of assuring that:

a. A coherent and effective linguist policy for Army intelligence is developed, maintained and reflected in applicable intelligence doctrine and concepts.

b. OPLAN requirements for intelligence linguists are consistent with pertinent doctrine, and are realistic, supportable and documented.

c. Intelligence positions requiring a linguistic capability are identified in applicable authorization documents, to include respective required levels of proficiency.

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d. Appropriately trained personnel are assigned to validated intelligence positions requiring a linguist.

e. Acquisition of intelligence linguists receives appropriate advertising, sales promotion and recruiting support to insure relative parity between requirements and assets is maintained.

f. The career development of intelligence linguists is afforded equity with other specialties.

g. Intelligence linguists, especially in CONUS and Hawaii, receive realistic utilization and challenging training to maximize maintenance of proficiency.

h. USAR intelligence linguists assets are fully factored into contingency planning and are afforded comparable utilization, challenge, incentive and career development as active duty intelligence linguists. These complementary efforts are expected to be completed by mid-December 1975, and a full report of LINCOB findings and recommendations will be forwarded for your review.

U. S. Navy

a. Establish career incentives:

(1) Cash bonuses for increased proficiency, scaled higher for critical languages and/or levels, supported by continuing "proficiency pay" for maintained capabilities.

(2) Generous travel funding of attendance at international conferences and training courses where critical and major languages will be used - to be available to both translators and analysts of "Limited Working" proficiency and upwards.

(3) Encouragement of intelligence analysts to take initial language training on a part time basis during working hours, with an initial full time exposure (2-3 months) at DLI.

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b. Use local institution resources on a consultant or contract basis, informing them of special needs of language training/skills for intelligence workers and, so, encourage the forming of appropriate courses to meet our needs.

c. Cross train translators and intelligence analysts by exchange internships.

### U. S. Marine Corps

a. The overriding requirement in the area of language training is to increase the ability of DLI graduates to speak the particular language. This requires a shift in emphasis at DLI from aural to oral abilities. To this end, the Marine Corps is formalizing its language training objectives requirements for submission to DLI. The ultimate solution may well require DLI to conduct parallel courses in each language: one for cryptologic linguists and one for general intelligence personnel.

b. To assist in the continuing training of interrogator-translator personnel, a formal system of intermediate/advanced courses in the more critical languages should be established. A statement of Marine Corps requirements in this regard is being prepared.

### DIA

Encourage personnel with existing language capabilities to maintain their proficiency levels by providing financial assistance for refresher courses, various assignments where there are language requirements, etc.

### State

"With respect to recommendations for solving the linguist problems, I believe you have made the right beginning by assessing requirements and resources."